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ABSTRACT

To overcome public skepticism, government agencies and policymakers are increasingly appropriating the term "research-based" to describe their work. This paper examines how educational leaders should respond to the politicization of their field, implicit in such characterizations, by examining how the field might look if the words "culture," "context," and "borders" were central in scholarship. Changes in scholarship since the pivotal 1997 University Council for Educational Administration conference are closely considered. Because it is impossible to predict all the consequences of change in advance, effective leaders must learn to incorporate new ideas into ongoing research, support the efforts of researchers, and build suitable accountability systems. The two narratives dominant in the culture of educational leadership, moral authority and structural-functionalism, have been imposed on the field from without. The 1997 UCEA conference attempted to reverse this dynamic by reintroducing the sociopolitical contexts and ideas inherent in the field, facilitating a richer, more genuine dialogue. Making culture, context, and border crossings more prominent in educational scholarship requires beginning the discourse with a review of existing definitions, associating cultural context with social problems, conducting quality research studies, and creating new literacies. Numerous examples of successful efforts are analyzed. Motivating and sustaining challenges to the status quo requires recognizing the demands placed on educational institutions by the increasing diffusion of diversity, the certainty of new demands on the system from activists, and a renewed emphasis on making schools accountable to society. (Contains 58 references.) (TEJ)

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Precipitating Consequences in Educational Leadership: Diffusion, Activism, and Accountability

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Introduction

Although, there have been many attempts to reform the field of educational leadership, the historical record has not been good. From the 1988 "Report and Paper of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration" to a forty-year review conducted by Achilles (1994), the conclusion, in the latter's own words, is "inescapable." That is, across a broad range of program design variables including both structures and content, educational administration programs have remained essentially unchanged. Yet, during this same timeframe, we as a profession have been among the leading advocates for K-16 educational reform in this country. Many of us who work inside of departments of educational leadership have seemingly ignored this self-contradiction, at least on the programmatic level. As professionals, we know who and what we have control over: ourselves and our work. And, so long as we *believe* that our work, as teachers, researchers, and consultants has integrity and credibility, we continue to grow and develop. While this may make personal sense, it begs the questions of educational reform, with respect to our university-based programs and to schooling in America.

While educational researchers *per se*[1] are associated with promoting new, reform-minded ideas, there is public and professional skepticism that researchers and research can actually accomplish any real school reforms. Ironically, government agencies and policymakers, particularly lay school board members and newspaper editors, have recently expropriated the term "research-based" in order to garner support for one educational reform over another. The term "research-based" still carries legitimacy, yet its meaning is not at all clear. What should be made clear, however, is that, at times, its usage has been politicized. How the profession of educational leadership responds to this politicization is the topic of this essay.

Specifically, I will examine the relationship between educational leadership [as research, policy, and practice] and school reform efforts, framing my arguments along the issues raised at the 1997 University Council of Educational Administration [UCEA] conference which deliberately sought to redirect research, policies and practices of the field. The title of that UCEA conference was, *"Negotiating Borders: Culture and Context in Educational Research, Policy, and Practice,"* and, I believe, it was a singular event aimed at the field's historic imperviousness to change.[2] My purpose, therefore, is twofold: (1) to imagine what the field of educational leadership might look like if the words "culture," "context," and "borders," were at the center of the field's scholarship, rather than subservient to the dominant concept

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[1] Throughout this essay, I view educational leadership research as a "case study" within the larger world of educational research.

[2] Of the 164 paper/symposium sessions during the two and a half-day conference, forty-five papers used the terms "context" and/or "culture," while another twenty-six referred to borders/barriers/boundaries."

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of "management;" and (2) to investigate some of the directional changes in scholarship since that UCEA conference. In so doing, I will be examining both intended and unintended consequences in order to assess the field's willingness and/or reluctance to change directions.

Throughout the last century, there have been many ongoing professional conversations inside and out of the field of educational leadership. In addition to the number of formal organizations in educational leadership [e.g., NASSP, NAESP, NCPEA, AASA, etc.] at the national, state, and local levels, we have also established numerous Task Forces and Commissions [e.g., NPBEA] to study educational reform. Talented and dedicated educators, all of them leaders, participate in these organized activities as part of their lifelong commitment to education. In my opinion, most of the reports and monographs have been insightful and progressive – and I believe the field would be advanced if we could implement some of their recommendations. I feel that this is particularly true when different scholars offer dissenting views as part of the reports and research. And that's the point I want to highlight throughout this essay: we are a *diffuse* field of [not just "with"] dissenting views. Until we come to that conclusion, our activism as leaders will continue to be unsuccessful. We will continue to force social, cultural, and political realities of schooling into a narrow range of concepts that at one end of the continuum, defies consensus, and at the other end, stops short of leading to an all-out culture war.[3]

[Un]intended Consequences

To the extent that both intended and unintended consequences cannot be totally foreseen or predicted by conventional wisdom, they represent, more or less, a challenge to what is already known and currently being practiced. Moreover, both intended and unintended consequences can potentially make matters worse than they currently are. In other words, rational planning is no guarantee that the results of our actions will be successful. That does not mean that we abandon planning and organizing and just let chance and accident take over. What is does suggest, however, is that our accountability systems should be attuned to intended and unintended consequences. As for results, they become known *ex post facto*, when we are able to measure the effects/values of our actions. Thus, with no *a priori* guarantees as to the truth or value of consequences, we must learn how to (1) incorporate diffuse ideas into a coherent research agenda, (2) support the investigators in their efforts, and (3) build an accountability system into our ongoing work as researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

History tells us that we have trusted intentional over unintentional actions – but not always to the benefit of *childrenkind*. In educational leadership, the realities of everyday contingencies have been in direct contrast to managerial mindsets and rational problem-solving that currently dominate our theories and practices in the field. As for the practical significance of our rational managerial mindset, I would point out that negative effects of unintended consequences are more easily tolerated and forgiven in a free and creative environment, whereas the very same negative effects can be devastating to all involved in a closed-minded

[3] In another essay, Emerging Trends in Teaching and Learning in Educational Leadership, I describe a typology of educational leadership programs as normal graduate programs, predators, and academy. I don't use the term "culture war" to describe this emerging structural trend, but I could see how others might see it as such.

one – which is certainly not the kind of environment that Americans want to promote in their schools.

Past and Present Contexts

For those not familiar with the University Council of Educational Administration [UCEA] as a professional organization and its annual conference, it is important to know that UCEA is comprised of a select group of approximately fifty North American research universities which grant doctoral degrees in educational leadership. Given the prestige of this organization, one can assume that the annual conference titles are meant to signal future research and policy directions for the field at large.

In making the above assumption, that the 1997 conference theme was a deliberate attempt to change the future directions of educational leadership research, policy or practices, the question of organizational power comes to the fore. Specifically, how can the University Council of Educational Administration as an elite organization simultaneously promote and protect those scholars who might seriously engage in work along the lines suggested by the conference theme? Surely, such non-normal-science research[ers] (Kuhn, 1962/1970) would have to travel through the meanings of cultures and contexts, crossing traditional borders so as to recreate educational leadership in ways unanticipated by today's policymakers and practitioners. In other words, here was a prestigious professional organization that was proposing a radically new agenda, one that could potentially challenge the power and privileges of its own membership and constituencies.

Larger Contexts

When viewing education as a whole, I think it is accurate to assert that by 1997 the stated intentions [i.e., values and beliefs] of most educators had already embraced the now familiar refrain, *all children can learn* (a variant of the 2001 UCEA conference theme). At the same time, however, educational leadership researchers were still being trained to bracket school realities into narrow researchable questions, to apply formal and rigorous methods of analyses, and to state their findings in a language consistent with the dominant professional norms for conducting educational research. Moreover national and state educational policymakers were still, for the most part, ignoring the voices closest to instructional implementation, that is, the voices of principals, teachers, students, parents, and their communities. Thus, the same field that has been in a virtual stasis for five decades [or more] was itself now proposing to create and sustain professional and structural changes.

Outside of education, across academia, many a professional association and disciplinary field of study has been torn apart when its members pursued issues pertaining to culture, context, and borders. Such rifts have been labeled the "culture wars." In contrast, whatever disputes have existed inside the field of educational leadership [e.g., armchair theory versus real world practice, management versus instructional leadership, etc.], these debates seem timid in comparison to those disciplines which have suffered through culture wars. Acknowledging this difference, we might ask, who in educational leadership would deliberately pursue a path filled with rancor and acrimony – unless he or she believed that that was what the field needed in order to be revitalized. We might further ask, whether the UCEA theme reflected the need for a paradigmatic shift or was it merely another example of an adolescent academic field

"thrashing about for a more appropriate knowledge base" (Murphy, 1995, p. 66)? Certainly, culture, context and border crossings as ways of researching, policymaking and practicing would challenge the knowledge constructed from traditional ways of knowing (Donmoyer, et al., 1995; Foster, 1986). Was it ironic or appropriate that UCEA should become the setting for radical thoughts and actions?

Dominant Values and the Culture of Educational Leadership

Historically, two narratives have dominated educational leadership thought during the 20th century. The first narrative is derived from moralistic principles, that is, the belief that Judeo-Christian-Protestant Ethic ideals are sufficient for guiding educational actions. Under this framework, educational leaders are selected as individuals who are seen as paragons of virtue, acting with both educational, statesmenlike [sic], and moral authority. The second dominant paradigm comes from an American pragmatic belief in getting the job done—efficiently and effectively. Here, educational leadership comes not only with a can-do attitude, but also with the observable skills based on the teachings of scientific management and technical competency. When both narratives are viewed to be in concert, then the effects are even more powerful, literally capable of defying change for a century.

Affixed to both of these narratives is the professional and organizational separation between the fields of educational leadership and that of teaching and learning. One of the understated, but explicitly assumed corollaries of this divide is the belief that educational leaders have been *chosen* because they possess culturally superior traits [e.g., historically not limited to talents and skills; race, class and gender distinctions are replete in the historical literature of educational leadership] to those engaged in the daily work of teaching and learning. With this moral distinction also comes differences in social, political, and economic status. Thus, the organizational structures reinforce the values of educational leadership as a position endowed with power and privileges.

Often overlooked in these two narratives, however, is their common socio-cultural genesis: that is, both moral authority and structural-functionalism have been imported from outside the field of education and imposed upon it. In other words, within the large dominant cultural context, neither moral authority nor efficient and effective practices are inherent in education, either in theory or practice. One way to interpret the UCEA conference theme of "contexts," "culture," and "border crossings," is as a deliberate stand to recapture the core values of education, and thus recreate a different normative perspectives for the field of educational leadership. Two questions follow: (1) why would UCEA risk abandoning the traditional narratives of moral leadership and rationality in order to discover its own as yet under theorized connections to contexts, cultures and leadership? And, (2) how would the introduction of culture, context and border crossings be framed as alternatives to traditional ways of knowing? If we assume that moral leadership and rationality have been well served by the traditional pursuit of truth, universal principles, and fixed criteria to judge validity, what different research or policy discourses emerge when contextual and cultural identifiers such as idiosyncrasies, anomalies, particularities, and outliers – labels historically and culturally associated with dysfunctional, if not immoral and weak educational leadership theories and practices – were to be embraced by the leading scholars of the field?

To abandon universalism,[4] whether rational or moral, might potentially lead to unintended consequences such that a moral educator might no longer be viewed as synonymous with being a moral person (Miron, Bogotch, & Biesta, 2001); similarly, the ability to think critically, imaginatively, and pedagogically might not lead to the same conclusions as thinking logically, rationally, or normally. In other words, by opening the doors to contexts, cultures, and border crossings, we are sure to discover messier research questions, methods and policies [as well as more diverse individuals!] which in turn would challenge so-called "best practices" currently being taught in educational leadership programs – ironically at these very same UCEA member universities. It is one thing to dissect cultural differences among powerless school teachers and children, but quite another to dissect cultural differences among powerful adult leaders and their professional organizations.

Dewey long ago argued that the key educational leadership practice was to support experiences that were good [meaning educative], and then keep sustaining them across idiosyncratic [partial] contexts and cultures (Bogotch & Roy, 1997; Bogotch & Taylor, 1993). But Dewey's theories have rarely been followed in actual leadership practices and have often been viewed as promoting social relativism, which many people today believe to be responsible for the moral and educational decline in our schools and society. Why should we risk reopening that door?

Relocating Educational Leadership

A logical place to look for educational leadership in academia is inside of departments which teach it. Structurally and functionally, university educational leadership departments present a wide range of organizational practices and belief systems. At one end of the spectrum are departments which teach leadership as a generic subject [i.e., leadership qua leadership], echoing the classic texts of the "theory movement" which asserted that what educational

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[4] Throughout this essay, I discuss contexts and cultures in terms of their socio-political and cultural consequences for doing educational leadership research, and avoided engaging in a philosophical discussion of specific knowledge and knowledge of universals. There are two analogous philosophical problems: (1) how knowledge in a specific context is transferable in other contexts, and (2) how do we have knowledge of universal concepts pertaining to essential aspects of either culture or biology. Excellent discussions of these problems can be found in two of Plato's dialogues, Meno and Theaetetus, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Russell's The Problems of Philosophy, and Quine's From a Logical Point of View. For me, American pragmaticism, especially the works of James and Dewey, provide an alternative bridge from metaphysics to practical consequences. But even Plato was aware of how the two planes of the argument, philosophy and politics, intersect:

> Line 211 **Socrates**: So, apparently, to the question, `What is knowledge?' our definition will reply, `Correct belief together with knowledge of differentness,' for, according to it, `adding an account' will come to that.
>
> **Theaetetus**: So it seems.
>
> **Socrates**: Yes, and when we are inquiring after the nature of knowledge, nothing could be sillier than to say that it is correct belief together with *knowledge* of differentness or of anything whatever.
>
> B So, Theaetetus, neither perception, not true belief, nor the addition of an `account' to true belief can be knowledge.
>
> ....
>
> D **Socrates**: [My italics] *Now I must go to the portico of the King Archon to meet the indictment which Meletus has drawn up against me. But tomorrow morning, Theodorus [Theaetetus' teacher] let us meet here again.*

leaders needed to study was administration qua administration (Halpin, 1966). In contrast, there are departmental cohort models, in which leadership is taught in a partnership with local school systems. Here, the structure and content taught is said to be directly influenced by the local contexts. On the surface, these two structural-functional models look to be very different. Whether or not they are seems doubtful considering that across the country, these "differences" are not reflected in the daily practices and roles of school administrators – or in the new national and state-level reforms called standards and accountability.

Nevertheless, there are reform-minded educational leadership programs, too numerous to describe here, ranging from programs which have re-centered teaching and learning inside of educational administration to programs supplemented by localized contexts, geopolitics, as well as humanities and critical philosophies (Bogotch, April, 2001). Again, it is unclear whether such divergence signals a paradigm shift, more historical and incoherent thrashing about in the field (Murphy, 1995), or perhaps some generic characteristic of the diffused nature of educational leadership.

Outside of university departments, the picture of educational leadership is even more diffuse. As with departments, the spread of scholarly journals and professional associations [such as UCEA, NCPEA, NASSP, AASA][5] which use the term "educational leadership" in their titles or literature indicates very little consensus. But, perhaps the most striking indication that educational leadership is either adrift or diffuse lies in the fact that the majority of the individuals who exercise influence over educational institutions and policies have never taken a single course in an educational administration program inside of a College of Education graduate school. The individuals heading research institutes, universities, professional schools, and government agencies all make educational policies and decisions totally unaware of the latest scholarly debates or texts in our field. Is there a comparable dynamic in any other profession? Do we have a scholarly or legal code of conduct to challenge such practices?

In educational leadership, we live with the *diffusion* of ideas, experiences, and practices. In response, there are those who advocated a path taken by other professions, such as law and medicine (Daresh & Playko, 1995) to regain [or remake] its knowledge base and status. The contrary view here would ask whether our diffuse knowledge reflects a meaningful characteristic embedded, if not hidden, inside of our educational theories of knowledge and practices. The field has remained intellectually and pragmatically uncentered and diffuse [keeping multiple perceptions alive until they evolve into conceptions or definitions (James, 1925], made up of widely different beliefs at every level, individually, professionally, institutionally, and socially. Is that an unintended consequence, an accident to be corrected by better research methods and theory, or does it represent something inherent to our field? Let's just suppose the latter were the case: what practical as well as theoretical implications can emerge from embracing this scholarly direction?

UCEA's Challenge: A Matter of Historical Significance, or Not?

Culture and context (i.e., socio-cultural influences) have always influenced what educators do

[5] To some, these organizational forums represent an historic "culture war" across the spectrum of educational leadership. My focus here is *within* UCEA-like institutions only.

and think. Historically, socio-cultural influences [along with their core values and ideologies] have been imposed from outside of education, either by business, government, and/or university elites (Callahan, 1962; Gelberg, 1997; Tyack, 1974). The 1997 UCEA conference intentionally reversed the dynamic by extending the meanings of educational leadership and by re-introducing socio-cultural factors (Callahan, 1962) into the discourse and analyses of education and educational leadership. In other words, by accepting education on its own terms, and by recognizing the field's inherent dynamics, serious conversations could proceed from the inside out—rather than from an agenda imposed from outside in. Investigation of socio-cultural ideas emanating from inside a profession has this paradoxical effect, that is, it permits researchers to think "outside the spectrum of thinkable thought" (Chomsky, 1987 cited by L. Barnett, 1993), holding in check [for at least two and half days at the conference] the skills and training which define, control for, delimit, and measure social and cognitive science constructs. One could say that such discussions deliberately dismantle a traditional disciplinary community in order to rebuild it anew.

Reading further into the intentionality of the conference text, the UCEA theme explicitly recognizes that differences among us are at least as [morally] important as the socio-cultural ideas and values which bring us together within a democratic society. Moreover, it presumes, because the setting is at doctoral degree granting universities that such analyses must be both rigorous and relevant (Duke, 1997). That presumption, with its criterion of methodological rigor needs to be re-examined, especially in terms of validity and accountability. The impetus for relevancy comes in order for researchers to be more active as participants in both policymaking and practice debates on school improvement. It might also reflect a desire to be more representative of the field of education itself in terms of race, class, and gender.

We turn now to the problematic consequences of shifting culture, contexts, and border crossings to a more prominent place in our scholarly work. I have identified four contrary and problematic propositions, each having consequences, the most consistent being our ability to keep cultural debates at bay. The four problematic issues are: (1) beginning discourse with pre-existing definitions; (2) associating "culture" and "context" with socio-cultural problems and solutions; (3) conducting quality research studies; and, (5) creating new cultural literacies. Following these brief discussions, I look toward the future possibility for precipitating consequences along the lines of diffusion, activism, and accountability in educational leadership.

Relocating Education Leadership Research

1. Beginning Discourse with Pre-Existing Definitions:

My concern here is limited to how the use of pre-existing definitions tends to limit the possibilities for new discourses and new ideas. Definitions, of course, are helpful, linguistically in communication. But my concern is with the thinking [or lack thereof] behind the use of definitions, namely, that it tends to promote the idea that there is one correct definition, a so-called "definitive definition." As a result, we tend to bring closure to our research, policies, and practices prematurely.

By reducing the number of possible meanings to a single definition, we tend to take for

granted the influences of contexts and culture and proceed to THE definition to solve a problem. Once we settle on THE definition [of a problem], then we are directed towards finding THE solution to that problem. What makes this hypothetical description of definitions and solutions problematic is that we are living/working in a continuously dynamic educational context with social, political, historical, and economic forces in play. For many centuries, philosophers wrote that the highest form of thinking was pure abstract thought governed by rational, logical mathematical laws—independent of contexts and cultures. When the field of educational leadership began to develop an organizational mindset halfway through the previous century, it constructed elegant flow charts, decision-trees, and other rational devises to aid administrative thinking. As a field, we tried to follow a higher, more rigorous logic, ignoring the ever-present and changing contexts. And when we would experience a failure, usually at some implementation effort, we went back to redesigning the model instead of questioning our underlying assumptions and purposes.

For communications' sake, we cannot abandon definitions; but we can begin to see how words and phrases are connected to cultural contexts. For example, while I was working with a group of educators on the issue of technology standards in the state of Louisiana, I heard the words "pencils" and "chalkboards" used in reference to technology. A group of rural educators were explaining how in their schools, they didn't expect to have internet connections available for their students during the next few years, and they didn't want the definition of technology as written into standards to be used to punish them. At that table were educators from all geographic and economic levels – no one had any trouble understanding what these rural educators were saying, nor did they have a problem with extending new meanings to the word technology in this specific context. What was not acknowledged then or now was that once the conversation ended and the word "technology" was attached to the word "standards," there was no written record of the different contextual meanings discussed around the table. Once the context shifted from development to implementation, there were no safeguards to protect the rural educators from the state –level policymakers or the public (Bogotch, 2000a).

Therefore, the difference between a socially constructed, agreed upon meaning of a word versus meanings that are presented and defined as "given," is that the latter's status usurps the reality of practice. Historically, that which has been "given" as a proxy for reality has tended to promote the interests of those already in power. In educational leadership, such taken-for-granted givens were tied to "Anglo Saxon" values [as well as heritage] of leadership and virtue. In whatever context or setting, certain values or culture were extolled as rational and virtuous. And the more a dominant cultural explanation was accepted, the less specific differences mattered Culture was endowed biologically with innate characteristics defining what values and behaviors should be promoted over others. While racist and sexist language/practices have been decreasing [at least in educational leadership], the remnants of such thinking remain below the surface, resisting "border crossings" except that which was deemed legitimate, i.e., social mobility of immigrants and the working class.

Specifically in terms of doing educational research, the words "culture" and "context" have been variously depicted as background, settings, group and institutional membership influences [distal and proximate], placeholders and markers of identity, discrete variables

[e.g., race, SES, age, gender, etc.], storylines, belief and value systems, processes, geopolitics, relationships, situations, macro and micropolitics, lived histories, and taken-for-granted assumptions. As with so many of our social science constructs, we can intellectually create a definitional superstore. But in "reality," we quickly settle for "all things being equal" and what is understood as "for purposes of this study only."

While we cannot escape from the numbing effects of definitions in our research and thinking, we can, at least metaphorically, propose some counter explanations. Beginning with leadership/management/organization studies, an assumption is usually made that it is preferable to begin reform discourse with shared, agreed upon meanings, whether the topic is standards, goals, visions, rules, processes, or innovative programs. There are at least two issues here which make this convergent, normative [also fixed, static, and romantic (see Shields & Seltzer, 1997)] objective problematic: (1) the differences in meanings across cultures and contexts; and, (2) the lack of any theoretical argument to encompass both "culture" and "context" as educational [as opposed to noneducational socio-cultural influences: believing in the uniqueness of educational institutions and values].
We can see this problematic distinction clearly when we compare the same analogy used by two authors trying to illustrate different concepts from the same empirical phenomenon. The example here is a flock of geese flying in formation. Barth (1990), an author in educational leadership, sought to illustrate the practice of shared leadership, describing [i.e., personifying] how the different geese cooperatively assume the leadership point position as needed. He asserted that as soon as one goose tired, another from the formation took its place at the lead. Empirically true and as an analogy, it makes sense. Another author, R. D. Laing (1967), a psychiatrist by training, questioned the uniform direction of the geese flying in formation, and then wondered whether a single goose which did *not* choose to "cooperate" might not only be the real leader of the flock, but also the only sane one – should the flock be heading in the wrong direction. Barth presents a powerful image of shared leadership [versus individual leadership]; Laing offers a powerful indictment of his field and what society labels as "abnormal." While Laing poses his narrative in hypothetical terms, Barth argues for the legitimacy of shared leadership. What Shields and Seltzer (1997) might propose is that unless we know the empirical context and begin to understand the differences across communities, we should not elevate the concept of shared leadership or sanity to either a best practice or truth. Too much of the narrative is left unexplored to do anything more than illustrate.

But isn't there more to culture and context than descriptive facts? Culture implies a lived history out of which a group, organization, or society comes together under a set of rules and ethical principles. Context implies continuous time and space contingencies, lived and felt experiences [distal and proximate], focusing on everyday practice, processes, and subjectivities. Conceivably, by the time a researcher has a fix on the meaning of a context, it is gone, moved on into something different. In 1959, Barzun wrote,

> We forget that every age has carried with it great loads of information, most of it false or tautological, yet deemed indispensable at the time. Of true knowledge at any time, a good part is merely convenient, necessary indeed to the worker, but not to an understanding of his [sic] subject"
> (p. 11).

Knowledge is always in flux and our knowledge base is diffuse. Is it any wonder why pre-existing definitions are so reassuring and hold such power and status?

2. Associating the meanings of "Culture" and "Context" with Socio-Cultural Problems and Solutions:

The association of "culture," "context," and "border crossings" with specific sociological terms such as race, class, and gender has been a mixed blessing: there is no doubt that as a nation we needed to confront and begin to set right the historical injustices surrounding discrimination and its social, political, and economic consequences. What was not intended, however, was to foster a problem-orientation in education. Education does have problems, and the problems are exacerbated by racism and sexism; but education itself is not a problem seeking a solution. Education is a process of teaching and learning wherein people grow intellectually and aesthetically. Again, the question turns on how we define words such as "problem" and "solution." In the modern era of rationalism, both problems and solutions were "stated in timeless, universal terms" (Toulmin, 1990, p. 11). Therefore, a problem orientation overshadows meaningful histories, significant cultural contributions, and positive social dynamics occurring within the vibrant contexts of diversity and difference inside and out of schools. A problem orientation further marginalizes groups/topics in at least two respects: (1) the expressed values tend to emphasize differences as "negative" and "other," rather than as distinctively valuable, and worthy of common discourse with respect to democracy, commonwealth, nationalism, peace, and humanity (Postman, 1996; West, 1994); and, (2) social reconstruction enables optimistic futures, alternative possibilities, and imaginative ways of knowing and acting (Dewey, 1948; Miron, 1996) – not as problems and solutions.

As a professional group, educators readily accept solutions that are perceived as decisive and practical—prior to discovering in practice whether or not they are educationally or socially sound [i.e., research-based]. There has always been a "pressure to demonstrate immediate utility in school administration and instruction" (Dewey, 1929, p. 23). This reality led Dewey to develop a theory of reflective practice as part of understanding "total" experiences; it also suggests the incompatibility of boss management with educational leadership.

> Administration, for the person possessing executive capacity, is easy and interesting, and the results are immediate and obvious. The improvement of instruction, on the contrary, calls for exact knowledge, involves the human equation, is slow and difficult, and the results are not so evident, even to the trained observer (Stone, 1929, p. v.).

Almost 70 years after Clarence Stone wrote his educational leadership text, Deborah Meier (1995) came to a similar conclusion:

> It's thirty years since I began and twenty-one years since Central Park East opened its doors. I feel almost as far from discovering how to make a difference as I did then.

> That sounds foolish, given our successes. But given what I wanted to do, it's a simple fact. The puzzle isn't, it turns out, one where you can finally put the last piece in and say 'Done.' It just gets more and more complicated (p. 181).

We can add the names of John Dewey, Maxine Greene, Elliot Eisner and other educators who have reached similar conclusions through their studies and practice. My own emphasis would be that every educational generation has to learn these truths for themselves and with it comes the responsibility to confront the seeming contradictions and tensions; then decide as a community the best directions for making educational reforms. I don't see this as a matter of definitions or as an educational problem.

3. Conducting Quality Research Studies:

Certainly, we are intelligent enough [and rigorously trained] collectively as professionals to conduct quality research studies. The issues here, however, are larger, pointing towards (1) new cross-disciplinary knowledge, (2) adequate methodologies for capturing "culture" and "context," and (3) activism (see Gitlin, 1994). Where will we find the guides to carry us along such paths?

In general, educational leadership research has tended to rely, uncritically, upon secondary sources for its *historical* background information. The reading of primary historical sources and making interpretations would require new understandings and skills. Neither area was stressed very much in my doctoral programs, as either a student or professor. Very few among us have corroborated the primary source citations from Callahan (1962), Cuban (1988), Tyack, (1974), etc. Yet, even as a nonhistorian, it is apparent that Callahan's "vulnerability" hypothesis differed from Tyack's educational elite "complicity" thesis. And, that Taylor, "a well-known efficiency engineer" (Bobbitt, 1913, p. 90) appears behind the scenes not only in educational translations by Bobbitt and but also in the works of other educational leadership professors [e.g., Courtis, Elliot] of the times. Without our own sense making of our history, we remain vulnerable to and seduced by those more powerful than us in society. Our continued reliance upon external political narratives depicted as the "recorded history" of educational leadership (Bogotch, 2000b) is corrosive. Before the emergence of cultural studies as an academic discipline in its own right (e.g., Postman, 1996), we were prevented from trespassing the sanctity of disciplined subjects. In history, we read the posted warnings: "It is of course difficult to see the events of one's own time in perspective. Often people in the past have failed to perceive trends or events that late historians identified as central or pivotal" (Tyack, 1974, p. 270). Disciplinary research methods, historical or otherwise, was to identify, classify, and label concepts which, in turn, (a) reify and (b) set up boundaries *by design* (my italics, see Gould, 1981).

Context, culture and border crossings challenge such designs, first rhetorically, then in practice. But how is that deconstruction attempted? Whose definitions are used? Which questions are asked? What methods and procedures do we follow? Historical research is different from doing sociological research which differs from anthropology or cultural studies or doing philosophy. What kind of professional development will members of the field of educational leadership need? To whom will it be offered? Will the incentive systems already

in place for generations be revised to accommodate re-education? What leadership role will UCEA, universities, and/or school systems take? How will changes be sustained and remain meaningful and relevant?

All of these questions point towards ...

4. Creating New Cultural Literacies:

I have arrived full circle back to the question of definitional knowledge. Our predispositions to embrace frameworks, models, wholes, laws, "one best systems," and "best practices, etc, coupled with the seminal names of Taylor, Webber, Tyler, Bloom, Kolberg are all testaments to our traditional ways of knowing. To reject and reconstruct may be liberal, conservative or radical [political correctness notwithstanding]. To fight for unthinkable futures, however, seems outside of either liberal or conservative thinking.

As a liberal, I rejected Hirsh's (1987) bipartisan arguments in the opening chapter of his text on cultural literacy. His views reflect the convergent and fixed ways of knowing based on the *barriers* of definitions ["a lexicon of words"], problems, solutions, and methods, but yet, his argument has been and still is culturally persuasive. How else can we explain the publication of a "global" cultural literacy (Appiah & Gates, Jr., 1997)? For the dominant white culture, Hirsch, Bennet and their adherents continue presenting ready-made visions, for all of us, wrapped in Christian morality. Along with Romance novels and self-help, pop-psychology books, cultural literacy has a direct tap into Americans' veins. No one aspires to being the "weakest link."

What knowledge and skills do educational leadership researchers need to combat cultural literacy truths? Conservatives and liberals debate the role of government, inside of the borders of normal discourse, in socio-economic terms—with philosophical differences. The former define progress as unleashing market forces to end monopolistic public education as we know it; the latter believe that we must save public schools [i.e., public school children] by providing more social programs inside of our public schools. Apart from this debate, "cultural" academics talk and write on a different wavelength . They argue for the need for social, oppositional, and critical spaces (Biesta, 1997, personal communication; Maxcy, 1995; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997) or from a social relativistic position (Scheurich, 1994 in Maxcy, 1994), i.e., "many knowledges would be elicited from many social and historical contexts" (p. 33). Such discourse angers policymakers and frightens practitioners to a far greater degree than does embracing a cultural literacy. Yet these are the directions towards which discourse on "culture" and "context" seem to be leading us; that is, towards concepts having changeable outlines, colored in with different textures and shapes and tone—unending. For a hundred years, we have known how difficult it is to interpret messy everyday practice/experiences (James, 1968). Are we prepared for the consequences of plunging headlong into postmodernism, culture wars, or who knows what without knowing how it will connect to the world of policymaking and practice?

The field of Educational leadership has gone through a number of different eras without any real paradigm shifts. Yet our knowledge base has emerged as plural knowledge bases, as

narratives and meta-narratives based on power and privilege (English, 1994). Yet, this plurality over time, by itself, would suggest that diversity is inherent in educational leadership, as ideas continually compete for prominence. The unintended consequence of cultural literacy suggests other possibilities including a new cultural literacy, multicultural literacies, and multiple, cultural literacies, each presented by participants as the way things are for [fill in the blank groups]? There are many scholars such as Schlesinger and Lefkowitz who see a national danger in playing with literacy and cultural categories. They argue that America needs [to maintain] a common cultural literacy in order to survive. They see whatever problems as fixable, treatable so long as we stay the course of the dominant metanarrative. Theirs is an educational policy of protectionism, not born of educational leadership.

Controversies abound in education. Many attribute this to a generic condition whereby everyone has an opinion about education. Simply having gone to school, and graduated [or not], it is assumed one knows what good education should be. Most deem theirs to be right, not only for their own children, but for other peoples' children as well. At the same time, educators themselves never seem as tough-minded as their outside critics, and for good reasons. Educators have a professional responsibility to ask, "what's best for all students," while sifting through the evidence that what works for one child in a class does not work for another child in that same class. Multiply this reality by 25 or 30 [a typical class size] for an elementary school teacher, and by 150 for a typical high school teacher. The result is that a conscientious educator tends to be equivocal and tentative. Unfortunately, in a bottom-line, results-oriented, me-first society, there is no leadership status attached to such an educational stance.

It is one thing to recognize the above social dynamics; it is another thing to try to understand how such dynamics have been constructed and perhaps—another tentative word—how the field of educational leadership can change them. There is a pragmatic, social reason for understanding why change should be important, and that is, because the practice of education needs constant improvement—while society needs to be constantly educated. Yet, even if this connection between education and society were embraced, it does not assure the continuance of public education as a social institution. Educational leadership research [policy and practice] has so far failed to provide a persuasive reason to change as well as a sanctuary to protect the change agents. As for the public who have been abandoning public education, they, too, see no socio-cultural or self-interested reason to return and help educate other people's children.

Overcoming Barriers: Counter Examples

I maintain my own optimism by reading, researching and staying in contact with practicing educators who have the wherewithal to struggle and challenge the *status quo*. These individuals, through a combination of asking critical questions and participating in social change efforts, have demonstrated courage and skills in bringing the external socio-cultural world into their everyday practices. They do not accept the given boundaries between schooling and living; just as significantly, they do not accept the subordinate status or oppressive role consigned to being an educator in America. Just as significantly, they have not succumbed to the deleterious effects of anti-intellectualism which sustains nonlearning

environments in so many schools. These individuals, many of whom are teachers, not just administrators, have identified their sources of power as socio-cultural, giving voice to the values of teaching and learning inside and out of their classrooms. They see education and schools not solely as a mirror of society, but also as a forum for reshaping the society in which we live.

Unfortunately, educators have had to learn how to put up with nonleadership indignities, exhibited by a lack of respect for ideas and for people, adults as well as children. We endure nonleadership at faculty and staff development meetings in which there is rarely input from participant teachers/principals regarding the agenda or topics, little or no time for questions or for discussions. The question isn't whether working conditions are worse in education than elsewhere in the adult world? Education is unique. But how do we cope with noneducational discourse? It's one thing to have to explain to noneducators why Joe Hall and his baseball bat is wrong; it's another thing to have to listen to educators defend such attitudes and behaviors as necessary under the circumstances. It is one thing to hear parents talk about a teacher's [usually a woman] inability to handle discipline in a high school. It is another thing to examine school district personnel practices that follow the same stereotypical profiling. I was, therefore, immediately taken by the leadership actions of Joseph Martin, a school trustee in Morrisville. Acting on his own and against the beliefs of the community, Mr. Martin decided to hire, the petite Ms. Jean Mitchell, the kind of teacher he would have liked to have had as a lad.

> The main qualification upon which the trustees strenuously insisted was strength. Every applicant for the position was carefully viewed , and if he or she seemed strong and muscular, the officials nodded their wise heads, and agreed to "try it once more." The results had seldom justified their expectations,... (Wray, 1904, p. 14).

By 1904, there was historical evidence for challenging conventional wisdom. Yet, it seems even today as if no amount of empirical evidence can sway educational practice away from this view of leadership as correlated to physical strength. I know a white high school social studies teacher on the West Bank of New Orleans who spent an entire summer in the gym pumping iron in order to gain the respect of his students [i.e., African Americans]. What evidence is so powerful as to defy what the research tells us? Do we ignore data that do not confirm conventional wisdom, in this case, the image of a strong man? Do educators misinterpret and therefore not know their students very well? Have educators who have been in schools their entire lives never learned about adulthood [or under certain circumstances do they deliberately choose not to act like adults]. Are we still entrapped in racist and sexist thinking that equates culture with biology (Gould, 1981)?

What else did we know in 1904 about the contexts and cultures of educating children? In the last section of Wray's account of Jean Mitchell's school, Newell Gilbert (1904), a Normal School professor and school director wrote a commentary on the community school in Morrisville. This is what he saw:

> The low ideas of the villagers and their failure to comprehend the teaching of children finds striking expression in the school premises. Barren and uninteresting without,

> dingy and forbidding within, the schoolhouse spoke of ignorance, of lack of thought, of abandonment to untoward conditions, that found reflection in the pupil's attitude. Rude, hostile, indifferent, disorganized, these children are altogether too sophisticated in the art of guying and deceit, in evasion and resistance, in disobedience and successful rebellion. Anarchy names correctly the condition which essentially exists. But this is not a condition native to these boys and girls: they are not innately bad. They are the inevitable product of the education to which they have been given over" (Gilbert, p.8)

Our historical views on racism, sexism, and class bias have been couched in biology as well as sociology. That is, we tend to locate problems inside of people, ignoring the power of pedagogy inside of good teaching and learning. We still have a difficult time with phrases like "disadvantaged" "at risk" and "poverty." Our moral legacies don't always let us as a nation embrace differences. When, where and how do we educationally challenge misconceived, cultural ideas? Why not challenge all misconceptions whether they emanate from inside or out of education? Why is the lack of leadership not challenged at faculty meetings or staff development workshops? Why do educators "sit and git" as if nothing is wrong? Somewhat ironically, Callahan (1962) had a socio-cultural response:

> Our leaders in education will have to have the kind of education in the humanities and the social and natural sciences to enable them to understand the great problems of our age, so that they can make intelligent judgments about the kind and quality of education which our children will need (p. 262).

But here Callahan becomes the idealist, not the pragmatic realist. I too believe that we need educational leaders who know about education, American history and American cultures. This is the perspective that brings hope, a hope grounded by substance, not images or rhetoric. But the school environment that has been so deadening to many of our students has been as oppressive, if not more so, to teachers (Waller, 1965). William O. Douglas in his 1952 dissent in Adler v. Board of Education of the City of New York, against hiring teachers who were members of the Communist Party, wrote about the consequences of fear:

> "Fear stalks the classroom. The teacher is no longer a stimulant to adventurous thinking; she becomes instead a pipe line for safe and sound information. A deadening dogma takes the place of free inquiry. Instruction tends to become sterile; pursuit of knowledge is discouraged; discussion often leaves off where it should begin.... We need be bold and adventuresome in our thinking to survive. A school system producing students trained as robots threatens to rob a generation of the versatility that has been perhaps our greatest distinction" (cited in Butts & Cremin, 1962, p. 557)

Justice Douglas could see then as clearly as Roland Barth (1990) and Theodore Sizer (1984) do today how a climate that retards adult learning condemns our children to a worthless education.

Just a Few More Examples of Hope

Although the following quote was written in an era of rising fascism and is filled with a social

class and sexist undertones, it, nevertheless captures the everyday quality of *American* educators as heroes and heroines:

> [W]e now see in America a leader who has never played the role of hero or savior and whose greatest ambition appears to be to look like a common human being, a member of the middle class by voluntary affiliation. Without frowning or putting on a mask of ferocity, he [sic] has taken on his [sic] shoulders the heaviest burden that any President ever assumed; he [sic] does not shirk the responsibility, and he [sic] stands ready to give an account of his [sic] stewardship which the time comes.....[P]erhaps the most appropriate term for this new American way of grappling with social and economic unrest is still the good old word 'democracy'" (Ascoli, M, Nov. 1933. Fascism in the making" in Atlantic Monthly, reprinted in Jubilee: One hundred years of the Atlantic, p. 421).

For educators, the rhetorical praise now has a hollow ring to it because it too often comes without concreteness. The occasional newspaper headlines, like the one about Shannon Wright, who placed her body between death and her students, does not translate into more power or privilege.[6] Whereas physicians take an oath to do no harm, educational leaders look for ways to create opportunities and make a difference. Perhaps Neil Postman (1987) was right when he urged a crowded auditorium of educators to imitate doctors who gained inordinate status, not by pursuing the high ideals of health, but rather when they focused strictly on combating illnesses. In this vein, education is too idealistic, and, therefore, illusive. And as a result, so few historical or social commentators even think of educators when formulating their notions of *Gesellschaft*. The most notable exception is Studs Terkel (1995). Inside Coming of Age, he included verbatim interviews with a number of school teacher educators. Each of them found unique ways to connect socio-cultural issues to schooling. All were educational activists who defined their accountability beyond the structural functions of schooling, reaching towards our democratic way of life. One negotiated the borders through participation in civil rights struggles; another through peace efforts. They gave meanings to students that transcended memorized facts, definitions, methods, content, tests [high stakes or otherwise]. Here is just one, Aki Kurose. She told Terkel,

> "When I first began teaching, I had to have lots of knowledge that I could share with my students, so they could memorize all these things. That's not what education is about. We need to teach them that the planet earth is here for us to cherish and share with everybody. We have to stop this possessive approach especially with young children. I realize as they grow up, they may have to compete. But at the low-elementary level, they need to build up their self-esteem and self-worth and, above all, learn to think." (p. 58).

Kurose ended in saying that "Science is exciting. Math is exciting. But it means little unless it

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[6] During the schoolyard massacre in Jonesboro, Arkansas [on March 24, 1997], Ms. Wright used her body to shield her students from bullets; she sacrificed her life. Rich, F. New York Times editorial.

is incorporated with peace." (p. 63).

New Consequences: Diffusion, Activism and Professional Accountability:
The above examples present a challenge to the field of educational leadership. Specifically, what can we do to (1) increase the number of teacher and administrator leaders in education, and (2) protect them from institutionalized fear? In this final section, I propose a three-sided response: recognizing diffusion, promoting activism, and establishing new standards of accountability.

Diffusion and Activism:
The theme of "culture," "context," and "border crossings" requires an independent and active mind – one that can strategically and successfully see past the institutionalized beliefs of disciplinary boundaries, profiling, and labeling. As professor teachers, we can assist in the development of such minds. As professor researchers, we can explode myths and strengthen the resolve of educators to take new directions. And, as professor policymakers, we can support and protect them structurally and functionally.

In this essay, I argued for a more pragmatic perspective of truth, one that is based on making a difference in people's lives (James, 1968). It is a truth that comes out of inquiry and questions, connected to immediate experiences as well as history. It is a truth that doesn't settle for fixed definitions, problem-orientations, quick solutions, or one [or two] cultural literacies.

Something significant did happen in 1997 that was a break with the past.[7] Toulmin (1990) described three possible futures for philosophy which, I believe, is also true for educational leadership: "It can cling to the discredited research program of a purely theoretical (i.e., "modern") philosophy, which will end by driving it out of business; it can look for new and less exclusively theoretical ways of working, and develop the methods needed for a more practical ("post-modern") agenda; or it can return to its pre-17th-century traditions, and try to recover the lost ("pre-modern") topics that were sidetracked by Descartes, but can be usefully taken up for the future" (p.11). Educational leadership has not decided between the second or third paths, but it clearly has abandoned the modern pathway.

If we examine the research topics/questions of today, it is clear that we are more diffuse and are seeking to become diverse, academically and socially. I don't foresee a smooth road ahead, but neither do I envision a culture war. Individually, we have begun to relocate the agenda of educational leadership research across a wide variety of topics found inside of more inclusive schools, special education programs, with second language learners and bilingual students, with Hispanic students, in a charter schools. We are researching how other peoples' children learn, mostly students of color in our changing demographic society. Our foci are on communities of difference for migrant parents, African-American males, linguistic minorities,

[7] The difference between the 1997 UCEA event and other previous "breaks with the past" is reflected in the initial actions taken by researchers in educational leadership. Whether there will be other structural changes in university program designs, the work of university faculty, and relationships with school systems and policymakers is still an open question.

Generation X, the Christian Right, and young adolescents. New global perspectives have also come into view, not in the study of elites, but of oppressed peoples in the Pacific and South America.

Not everyone can embrace this diffuse agenda, but even more traditional leadership topics have taken on a culturally relevant turn. We study urban reform in terms of race-consciousness, racial discourse, intergroup conflict, race, ethnicity and gender, children of color *and* social justice, board members *and* social justice, Black women leaders [principals and superintendents] *and* social justice. We study teacher-administrative relationships in terms of spirituality and school cultures. We are re-examining the border spaces of modernity, critical theory, and postmodernity. We are reflecting on black women graduate students as well as contextualizing the role of the assistant principal.[8] And the list keeps expanding.

These are not peaches and cream topics, but we cannot yet say that the "real" stories are being told. What we can say is that the traditional liberal responses are no longer adequate for understanding the dynamics of public education today. All this comes with a number of consequences, some good, some problematic. What are the consequences in pursuing "culture" and "context" in research, policy, and practices? To what extent will the meanings of the terms "culture" and "context" change the nature of our work and our interpretations of research findings? On the one hand, there is more diversity academically; on the other hand, educational leadership researchers are still learning how to use "context" and "culture" in research and policy recommendations as part of their knowledge bases, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies.

This diffusion brings new relevancy to the field of educational leadership. But this relevancy comes with a high price, that is, more unintended consequences. The most obvious is the loss of expert status. The diffusion of topics requires that we go out into the field not as experts, but rather as researchers asking question of which we don't know the answers. University-based researchers will no longer be able to do their work alone. We will have to build new and diverse learning communities which are more reflective of K-12 demographics than our own demographics. Today, we are predominantly white researchers studying diverse topics and to do so well means that we have to reconceptualize our work in the field. Social science has limited utility here (Kozol, 2000, pp. 115ff). Our collaborations must be with practitioners of color in order to bring diverse points of view to life. This new dialectic will not be easy to achieve but it should not be insurmountable either.

Another consequence is that educational leadership as a field has no fixed or true center. There will always be new, emerging issues [e.g., communities, ethnic groups, grade configurations, disabilities, etc.] that will be competing for our attention as well as that of the public (see Patri, 1917). An unfortunate, but anticipated consequence will be that many worthwhile topics will lose out in future political struggles for written policies and program development. Even as we use the misapplied concepts such as "at risk" less and less, there will be some population groups that will be studied more than others because of who we are [i.e., predominantly white]. To repeat, some topics/groups/issues will fall through the

[8] Topics listed were taken from the 2000 UCEA Conference program.

cracks or not attract our scholarly interest just as a matter of practice. This, too, is not an insurmountable "problem" as we strive to address socio-cultural needs in education more strategically and equitably.

Accountability

If there is any lack of intellectual commitment inside of public education, we should share in that responsibility. On the policy front, we must insist [be more persuasive] that teachers and administrators be given time on the clock to read, reflect, and think things over (Ryle, 1949, p.312). We can't ignore what the school systems [fear and distrust] do to students and adults. We need to challenge schools to become safer, more trusting, more reflective, and more critical spaces for teaching and learning.

Bringing new methodological rigor and cultural relevance to our practices will help educational leadership to be more accountable. Our research questions need to challenge the dominant cultural values and beliefs which have established positions of power and privilege in the *status quo.* But, this may lead to more, not less, confusion, corruption and fear in schools. So why try? I agree with Benjamin Barber (1993) that liberal and conservative America has not been serious about educational reform. Who is and what will it take to bring about change? All this is very abstract, so I want to conclude with one suggestion on the level of action that the field of educational leadership might consider.

For decades we have been awarding doctoral degrees at the highest rate in academia, far outpacing the other disciplines. What goods have we to show the profession or the public for these enormous effort in time and labor? We have made the Educational Leadership doctorate into many things, not all of them related to educational purposes: it is a career path, a criteria for our own universities' and programs' status,[9] self-interest, personal professional development. What we haven't done is create an intellectual accountability policy for the doctoral degree. Such a statement, would begin by asserting our commitment to intellectualism and educational purposes. We should make the distinction between exemplary leadership practice on-the-job and attaining an educational leadership doctorate.[10] The former is possible even without the degree. The latter needs to have a meaning in its own right.

The dissertation is not the end product, but rather an initiation into the world of ongoing scholarship, a world that comes with professional obligations to continue to contribute to the knowledge base. We must build relationships with practitioners that extend beyond the dissertation. We need to hold our graduates to a professional standard that insists upon sharing experiences and researching ideas . There is an educational wisdom and legacy that we have left fallow – to the detriment of education professionally and personally (Anderson & Jones, 2000). We need this new knowledge, and we need it now more than ever. We need this new knowledge, and we need it now more than ever. UCEA needs to take the lead and articulate the responsibilities of doctoral degrees, and all of us inside and out of UCEA universities need

[9] Inside of many comprehensive universities that are just beginning their climb up the Carnegie Rankings, the status of Educational Leadership programs is founded directly upon the numbers of doctoral recipients.

[10] A new conversation for those of us on the FAU doctoral faculty.

to challenge those that degrade its meaning in the market place. And this commitment need not represent a return to a dominant culture or culture viewed only as *Les Belles Artes.*

So what would educational leadership be if context and culture and border crossings, not management, were central to our practices?

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